

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Friday, March 9, 2007

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The Lansing State Journal

Published March 9, 2007

## **Mel Haga: Legislature owes children answers on safety funding**

The LSJ has taken a courageous stand regarding the state of Michigan's responsibilities to ensure that children are safe, both in their biological homes and in foster homes. That, however, takes money.

Other stories in the recent past have reported on the Republicans' very strong stand against raising taxes in any form. Their contention is that if they can finish the year without a tax increase, they would have had a major victory.

It's time for truth in government, from both sides of the aisle.

The facts are that Michigan is currently staffed at about 84 percent of need, based on Michigan standards for protective services and 74 percent of need for foster care workers within the Department of Human Services. Michigan's standards don't come close to the national standards for cases per worker, nor workers per supervisor.

It's no wonder that Children's Rights, the advocacy group out of New York, is now suing the state of Michigan to compel action.

Michigan has failed many children in the recent past - Ricky Holland, Rose Kelley, Isaac Lethbridge and Anisha Moy are all dead at the hands of the parents, biological, foster or adoptive, that were supposed to protect them. Many legislators have been quick to blame DHS and its employees for those deaths.

The question they need to answer, however, is if Child Protective Services is staffed at 84 percent of need, which 16 percent of the children would the Legislature like the department to fail? If Foster Care is staffed at 74 percent of need, which 26 percent of foster children do you want to fall through the cracks? If you can't or won't answer those tough questions, then you must step up to the plate and provide the necessary resources so these impossible choices do not need to be made.

The next time a child dies, Mr./Ms. Legislator, don't you dare blame DHS or the hard-working civil servants who try every day to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. If blame is the game, look within. What could you and your colleagues have done to save that next child? Personally, I don't think more child deaths will be considered a major victory by the citizens of this state.

Mel Haga is executive director of the Michigan County Social Services Association, which advocates on social service issues.



## Murder suspect's confession contested

Police say infant died in cover-up

March 9, 2007

BY L.L. BRASIER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

As Jimmie Reed rode in the back of a squad car after showing Pontiac police where he had tossed the gun he said he used to kill his girlfriend and the gas can used to douse his 2-month-old daughter before burning her alive, he had a simple request.

He wanted to call his mother. The detectives obliged and put him on a speaker phone.

"He talked to his dad and then his mother and said that he loved her," Pontiac Police Detective Douglas MacQuarrie testified Thursday. "Then he said to his dad, 'I did it ... I killed Markeda.'"

MacQuarrie's testimony came in the second day of a hearing in Oakland County Circuit Court into whether Reed's confession, including a taped one he gave to Pontiac police, should be tossed.

Reed, 30, of Detroit is charged with first-degree felony murder and arson in the deaths of Markeda Byas, 31, and her infant daughter, Arctavia Reed.

Police and prosecutors contend Reed -- the father of a 7-year-old and with a girlfriend nine months pregnant -- decided to kill Byas and the baby to avoid child support and to hide the relationship from his girlfriend.

In taped confessions played in court Thursday, Reed told how he shot Byas in the head in the morning hours of July 20 as she lay sleeping, then went to visit his girlfriend.

He then stopped and bought gasoline and a gas can at a Meijer discount store. He crept back several hours later and set the bed on fire as the baby lay next to her dead mother.

Reed's attorney, Sanford Schulman, contends police should have stopped questioning Reed after an attorney contacted police and told them he represented Reed. Police, under cross-examination Thursday by Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Barbara Morrison, said Reed never told them he had an attorney.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or [brasier@freepress.com](mailto:brasier@freepress.com).

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## Child abuser headed to prison

Friday, March 09, 2007

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

Robert Bernheisel was sexually abused as a child, and he grew up to be a pedophile, prosecutors say.

A judge Wednesday said that is a poor excuse for Bernheisel sexually assaulting an 11-year-old girl.

"You should have more of an appreciation of the destruction, and yet you go out and revisit the crime on some young child," Circuit Judge John McBain Jr. said.

Bernheisel, 46, pleaded guilty to second-degree criminal sexual conduct with a child.

Prosecutors dropped a count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in exchange for the plea -- a common move to spare young victims from testifying.

"It's such a complex crime, affecting the entire formation of a child," defense attorney Robert Gaecke said of pedophilia.

"That's not a persuasive argument," McBain said. Nor did Bernheisel's reported Christian conversion impress him.

Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates called the crime "disturbing" for the robbing of childhood and the cycle it represents.

"We see it repeatedly. Abused kids grow up and abuse kids," she said.

McBain gave Bernheisel the maximum sentence of 71 months to 15 years, and said Bernheisel should have gotten a minimum 15 years in prison.

"You have to be glad you have a liberal Legislature in Lansing," McBain said.

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03/09/2007

***News in brief***

## **Ex-Cheboygan man faces CSC felony**

**FROM STAFF REPORTS**

CHEBOYGAN — A former Cheboygan man faces multiple charges of criminal sexual conduct against a female victim under 13 years.

Christopher Paul Soullier, 34, has been under investigation by Michigan State Police in Cheboygan since a referral of the case arrived in 2005 from the state Department of Human Services.

Soullier is accused of having sexual contact with a minor female between 1998 and 1999 in Cheboygan County's Inverness Township. He was charged with three counts of criminal sexual conduct in the second degree, a 15-year felony.

Officials with the state Department of Corrections brought Soullier to Cheboygan from a prison in the Upper Peninsula, where he is serving an unrelated sentence. Soullier was arraigned in 89th District Court in Cheboygan, where he is scheduled to appear again for a preliminary exam on March 21.

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Man arrested in sex assault

By MIKE FORNES

Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - A 2005 referral from the Department of Human Services has led to the arrest of a former Cheboygan man on criminal sexual conduct charges.

Christopher Paul Soullier, 34, was arrested by Michigan State Police Troopers from the Cheboygan Post and charged with having sexual contact with a female victim under the age of 13 between the years of 1998 and 1999 in Inverness Township.

Soullier was arraigned Wednesday in Cheboygan County 89th District Court in connection with three charges of second-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person under the age of 13. Each charge is a 15-year felony, officials said.

Soullier was already in prison at Kinross, Mich., serving time on an unrelated charge, and was transported to Cheboygan for the arraignment.

A preliminary examination is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on March 21.

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March 9, 2007

**Taylor**

## Day care center shut down

Site accused of violating state rules may get license revoked

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

**TAYLOR** -- A Taylor day care center that once closed for the day and left a 3-year-old boy alone outside the locked facility was shut down Thursday by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The state ordered W.I.N.N.E.R.S. Child Development Center to cease child care services at the facility, which is located inside the lower level of West Mound United Methodist Church near Southland Mall. The state suspended the facility's license.

State officials declined to offer specific reasons for closing the facility, other than contending that it violated rules regarding "maintenance of premises and licensee requirements."

No one answered the phone at the center or the church. Attempts to reach Cheryl Collins, whose name is on the license, also were unsuccessful.

Collins will have an opportunity to go before an administrative law judge within the next 30 days to defend the center in the case. If she waives that right, the state will revoke the license, said Maureen Sorbet, Department of Human Services spokeswoman.

W.I.N.N.E.R.S., which has operated since 2003, has been investigated for violations in the past, according to state records.

Last May, a woman went to pick up her 3-year-old grandson at the center but was told his mother already picked him up. When the grandmother contacted the child's mother an hour later, she found out the boy was not with her.

The two women went back to the center at 8 p.m. and found the boy outside the facility, which was closed. The toddler was sitting at a pine tree between the center and a restaurant.

According to his mother, he was dirty, hungry and in a soiled diaper. His tooth was also chipped.

A week earlier, according to state records, an unannounced inspection found that the center was not operating with the required staffing levels. Outdoor activities require one staff member for every 10 children but during the inspection, there were 25 children playing outside with two staff members present.

The state also requires one caregiver for every four children who are younger than age 2 1/2, but at the time of the visit, there were only two caregivers for 10 children.

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com).

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Detroit Free Press

Wayne County news briefs

*March 9, 2007*

## **TAYLOR: Day care center's license suspended**

The state Department of Human Services has suspended a Taylor day care center's license for alleged maintenance and license violations.

W.I.N.N.E.R.S., housed inside the West Mound United Methodist Church, had been licensed since March 2003. The facility is permitted to have up to 60 children.

Department spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet declined to elaborate on the charges Thursday.

Last June, inspectors accused W.I.N.N.E.R.S. of having too few staffers on duty and propping open a door, which allowed a child to leave the building unnoticed, department records show.

Calls to the day care center went unanswered.





## THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

### Woman faces hearing on day care licensing

Friday, March 09, 2007

A Brighton woman faces a pretrial hearing March 19 on a misdemeanor charge of operating a day care business without a license.

Susan Walters-Steinacker, 52, pleaded not guilty while requesting a court-appointed attorney at her arraignment last week before 53rd District Court Magistrate Brian Brown. She is free on \$500 personal bond pending the hearing before District Judge Carol Sue Reader. If convicted, Walters-Steinacker faces up to 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Walters-Steinacker - known for her frequent criticisms of local officials who, she charges, disobey the rules - had been caring for three young children at her Brighton Lake Road home. However, she maintains she stopped caring for children there at the beginning of the year.

Brighton Police Chief Tom Wightman has said that at least until the latter part of January, Walters-Steinacker was continuing to offer day care services from her home without the proper state registration.

After being asked by The Livingston Community News last fall about whether she was registered with the state, Walters-Steinacker said she had been assured she did not need to be. She then rechecked with Michigan Department of Human Services officials, was told state licensing was mandated, and said she would comply.

According to state officials, those who run a baby-sitting service in their home for more than four weeks out of the year, whether an adult or a minor, are operating a family day care home and must obtain state licensing.

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Foster care in the African American Community — we still shall overcome

<http://www.michronicleonline.com/articlelive/articles/567/1/Foster-care-in-the-African-American-Community--we-still-shall-overcome/Page1.html>

By Carla A. Owens

Carla A. Owens

Published on 03/8/2007

No more are the days of slavery, Jim Crow and “Separate But Equal.” However, one issue that does exist and greatly impacts us in the Black community is the disproportionate number of African American children who are currently living in foster care. In the words of the great civil rights song, this is still an area where “we shall overcome.”

#### Get involved

For more than 80 years, February has been recognized as Black History Month. During this month, the country reflects on the past, present and future of the African American community. It is a time to celebrate the achievements of African American leaders and a chance to learn more about African American culture and history.

African Americans have come a long way through the years. No more are the days of slavery, Jim Crow and “Separate But Equal.” However, one issue that does exist and greatly impacts us in the Black community is the disproportionate number of African American children who are currently living in foster care. In the words of the great civil rights song, this is still an area where “we shall overcome.”

In the United States, there are currently over 513,000 children and youth living in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential needs. Of those children, over 32 percent of them are African American. In the state of Michigan alone, 51 percent of the over 21,000 children in foster care are African American. These numbers are quite disproportionate when you look at the fact that African Americans make up only 13 percent of the total United States population.

Since the beginning of time, one of the cornerstones of the Black community has been the Black family. African Americans have long exemplified the meaning of family and have held true to the African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. But unfortunately, so many of our children today are growing up without a permanent place to call home and many are wondering where their “village” is to rear them.

Even more troubling is that 20,000 young adults “age out” of the foster care system each year with no support system or permanent lifelong family connections. Because of this, many young people become homeless, incarcerated, unemployed, have substance abuse issues or become teen parents.

As a community, we all have a responsibility to address the pressing needs of the foster care population now or face the consequences for generations to come. Children and youth in foster care are often left vulnerable to a host of adverse situations.

While Black History Month was last month, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and December is AIDS Awareness Month, May is National Foster Care Month and like the others, it acknowledges an important issue that affects the community. National Foster Care Month is a time when America’s leading child welfare agencies, advocates, experts and foster care alumni come together to address the needs of foster children and connect these children to nurturing adults.

I encourage you to get involved. No matter how much time you have, there are many ways to help. You can become a foster or adoptive parent or you can volunteer with an organization that works with these youth.

By getting involved, you can change a lifetime of a child in foster care. Who knows, the child you help today could someday join the ranks of great African Americans we celebrate during Black History Month. However, if you don’t get involved, we may never know.

For more information about National Foster Care Month, planned community events and activities, and the many ways in which you can make a lasting difference for America’s children in foster care, please visit [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org).

Carla A. Owens is the communications and public affairs director for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a grant-making foundation created by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs.



## Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm Receives National Award for Campaign to End Homelessness in Michigan

WASHINGTON, March 8 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, at the Second Annual National Summit for Jurisdictional Leaders, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recognized Governor Jennifer M. Granholm with the "Every American Deserves A Home" award for her encouragement and leadership for Michigan's statewide Campaign to End Homelessness. Michigan's campaign includes dozens of complex strategies designed to eliminate barriers, streamline services and innovate solutions that will end homelessness as a costly social problem.

"We must continue to fan the flames of compassion and come together in pursuing a comprehensive strategy to end homelessness - because no person should have to suffer on the streets through a cold Michigan winter and no child's future should be threatened by missing school because she has no home," Granholm said. "As we work to revitalize our economy and build vibrant cities across the state, we must also have the will power, focus, and funding to confront today's epidemic of homelessness. I would like to thank Interagency Council on Homelessness for recognizing Michigan's efforts to end this tragic reality."

Collecting the award for the Governor was Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Executive Director Michael R. DeVos.

"This award recognizes the importance of the local planning efforts to end homelessness. Our state's effort is a mature one because we recognize that the work needs to happen at the local level," said DeVos. "We are very fortunate in Michigan that Governor Granholm has created a culture where her cabinet members are encouraged to take risks and select challenging goals."

USICH Executive Director Philip F. Mangano rallied the attendees throughout the Summit with motivating messages. "Our work is to hasten the day when every American will have a home," said Mangano. "To bring remedy to the pain and misery of those experiencing homelessness is what we are about."

The Summit, themed The Pursuit of Solutions, was inspired by the recent hit movie "The Pursuit of Happyness" starring Will Smith portraying the true life story of Chris Gardner.

Gardner, who experienced homelessness as young man, was faced with overcoming a personal financial crisis while juggling an unpaid internship and the needs of his child. Gardner and his son regularly slept in a subway bathroom and other public spaces.

To open the Summit on Wednesday evening those attending were able to visit with Gardner via a satellite feed, asking questions about what is next. Many wanted to know when and if Gardner could come to their city to inspire their communities for change. In 2005, before the movie was in production, Michigan invited Chris Gardner to address the Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing. His spirited and personal presentation was an inspiration to the 1,500 attendees, many of whom were front line homeless service workers.

The USICH Second Annual National Summit for Jurisdictional Leaders was held at the Washington Press Club for representatives from across the country.

MSHDA is a quasi-state agency that provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing, engage in community economic development activities, and address homeless issues. MSHDA's loans and

operating expenses are financed through the sale of tax-exempt and taxable bonds and notes to private investors, not from state tax revenues. For more information on MSHDA programs and initiatives as well as the Campaign to End Homelessness, visit the Web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/mshda>.

SOURCE Michigan State Housing Development Authority

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Published March 9, 2007

## Faith-based group will consider new site to expand

Gunnisonville an option for Teen Challenge site

By Tom Lambert  
Lansing State Journal

After plans to expand a substance abuse recovery program at Lansing's Holmes Street School were scuttled, the executive director of the group is looking north to another Lansing School District site.

Lansing's faith-based Teen Challenge no longer is interested in the Holmes Street School, in large part because of the pressure by some city officials to find an alternate site.

They now are focused on several other sites, including Gunnisonville Elementary in DeWitt Township, which Superintendent E. Sharon Banks has recommended to be closed this summer.

"It would be a waste of time to continue going through this process with the Holmes Street School," said the group's executive director, the Rev. Jeff Turner, who declined to name other sites they are considering, including a few in Lansing.

"We will just move forward and find some place else to go."

The Christian program has outgrown its space at 510 W. Willow Street and wanted to move into the Holmes Street School building on South Holmes Street so it could expand from 64 tenants to 96.

Lansing district officials closed the school in 2000.

Teen Challenge was willing to purchase the building from the school district for \$205,000, but the date for the purchase agreement has expired.

Lansing schools Chief Financial Officer Scott Powers said the property is back on the market.

But, with no signs of interest yet, the district would reconsider selling to Teen Challenge if it receives city approval.

"It's going to be a tough property to sell," Powers said.

Some city officials, including Mayor Virg Bernero and Council President Harold Leeman, expressed concern over the group being in the middle of a neighborhood.

"This neighborhood was put in a reactive mode," Leeman said.

### About Teen Challenge

- The Christian group consists of nearly 200 centers throughout the United States; the centers help people with problems such as alcohol and drug abuse. Lansing's group took the national name, but helps people only 18 years old and older.

- To learn more about the group, go to: [www.teenchallengeusa.com](http://www.teenchallengeusa.com)

Source: Lansing Teen Challenge

"The school district could have handled it much better and had more dialogue with the neighbors."

Some residents of the area north of Potter Park have said they would feel unsafe with people they characterize as criminals being nearby. Others have said their potential new neighbors should be welcomed, not shunned.

Turner said about 30 percent of the men in the program join it to avoid jail time.

"We are a good program," Turner said.

"We will just have to go where we are wanted."

Staff writer Nicole Geary contributed to this report. Contact Tom Lambert at 377-1063 or [tlambert@lsj.com](mailto:tlambert@lsj.com).

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Published March 9, 2007  
[ From Lansing State Journal ]

Friday's letters to the editor

## **Aid Teen Challenge**

What a shame Mayor Virg Bernero and city officials balk at helping Teen Challenge obtain the Holmes Street School to continue their work in Lansing. Does the mayor really believe Lansing's best interests are better served by a quick grab for a few more tax dollars from this property in the short term?

Let's hope the mayor and City Council will think long-term and work with Teen Challenge in helping people rebuild their lives and become valued, productive taxpaying citizens, contributing to life in Lansing, rather than costing us money, resources and grief, dealing with the well known effects of alcohol and drug abuse.

Compassion has its own value, but, in this case, it also has financial value. Let's take advantage of Teen Challenge's 80 percent success rate to make life better in Lansing, now and in the future for our children.

Ellie Vernon  
Lansing



## Overseer accused of dipping into funds

Friday, March 09, 2007

By John Tunison

The Grand Rapids Press

ALLEGAN -- The checks for a \$5,500 garden tractor and \$4,000 truck payment to GMAC left a clear paper trail.

Then there were the large checking debits Brian Hadley made to himself -- \$6,500 at one time and \$5,054 another -- that leave Dorothy Kroll shaking her head.

Kroll and her siblings were the victims of a crime they say never should have happened after Hadley, 31, of Allegan, was appointed by the Allegan County Probate Court as conservator of their father's finances in late 2003.

Hadley this week was arrested and charged with embezzlement from a vulnerable adult after police say he misused and co-mingled conservator funds under his control. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison.

Investigators were looking into whether Hadley also misused funds from three other clients, although they say any amounts likely were minor and involved swapping money from various bank accounts.

"Because he was court-appointed, we thought this was someone we could trust," Kroll said. "But the whole time he was pilfering my dad's money."

When the financial discrepancies surfaced a few months after Kroll's father died in November 2005 and court officials began asking questions, Hadley paid back \$66,856 to the family.

Kroll, of Dorr, considered her family fortunate. She initially didn't think the family would get anything back.

Her father, Raymond Weber, was a retired welder from a Grandville factory that made airplane engines.

Hadley was appointed conservator -- an agent who pays bills and handles finances for someone deemed incapable of doing it themselves -- to Weber in October 2003 after a dispute among his children.

Weber, a part-time farmer, had Alzheimer's and spent the past two years of his life in nursing homes in Wayland and Holland.

Allegan County Probate Court removed Hadley from all cases in 2005 once the financial inconsistencies surfaced. In his short tenure, he was appointed conservator to five individuals, including at least two developmentally disabled people who lived mainly off Social Security.

Hadley could not be reached for comment. He was arraigned Tuesday and released on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond.

State Police Sgt. Matthew Doan said the investigation against Hadley initially was closed in 2005, but reopened later when more financial data turned up through a court investigation.

"He was basically co-mingling money between accounts and there was a question about the balance not adding up," he said.



Margaret Murphy, a retired Department of Human Services employee who investigated Hadley for the probate court, looked at Weber's bank records and found a \$5,525 check for the garden tractor, an April 2004 check to GMAC for \$4,008 and various withdrawals made directly to Hadley.

She said records show Hadley also was replacing money, but not as often as he was withdrawing it. She discovered Weber's checking account had several overdraft charges while Hadley managed it. The account also was linked to an ATM card used by Hadley.

"Is it illegal for a conservator to have an ATM card? Probably not, but it just raises a red flag," Murphy said.

Linda Hays, probate register for Allegan County, said Hadley passed a criminal background check and his mother already was an established conservator, so court officials decided to start giving him appointments.

"You just feel horrible about it," she said.

Since the Weber case, the court has added new procedures to help prevent fraud, including credit checks on conservators and checking financial records more frequently for those under conservator/guardian care.

Kroll hopes her family's trouble saves others from similar circumstances. She believes public conservators should be required to be bonded, or insured against fraud.

Public conservators in Allegan County do not need to be bonded, but the Kent County Probate Court requires a bond that essentially matches the client's liquid assets.

Kent County Probate Register Susan Flakne said premiums on bonds can be expensive for conservators, but said the bonds offer indispensable protection.

**Send e-mail to the author: [jtunison@grpress.com](mailto:jtunison@grpress.com)**

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Published March 9, 2007

## Alison House apartments enable independent living

By Christie Bleck  
Lansing Community Newspapers

DELTA TWP. - Kim Munro just moved into her first apartment.

At 24, she is on her own for the first time.

It's made all the more sweet because she wasn't sure if it would ever be possible.

Munro, from Eaton Rapids, has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair to get around. She also is legally blind.

"I don't have to be dependent on my parents to do dishes," she said, "and I can get stuff out of the fridge myself."

Munro gained independence as a resident of Alison House, the area's first barrier-free apartment building for low-income adults with physical disabilities.



(Photo by BECKY SHINK/Lansing State Journal)  
On her own: Kim Munro (right), 24, laughs with Carolyn Haase Thursday in her apartment in Alison House. "I'm excited. But scared. But nervous," Munro said of living on her own. "There's not a lot of housing for people in the Lansing area with disabilities."

### Alison House

Lutheran Social Services' first barrier-free apartment building for low-income adults with physical disabilities in mid-Michigan.

- Units: 10 one-bedroom; four two-bedroom
- Amenities: barrier-free units, fully accessible kitchens, storage space, dining areas and bathrooms. Also includes a community room, laundry facilities and a small catering kitchen.
- For more information call manager Christine Parry at 323-4222.

The one-floor facility has 10 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom barrier-free units, each having a living room, fully accessible kitchen, dining area, full bathroom and storage space. Alison House also has a community room, laundry facilities and a small catering kitchen.

The facility, which was dedicated Thursday, is named for the late Alison Kamens, who suffered from congenital muscular dystrophy but still wanted to live independently, according to her parents. Alison died in 1997 at age 23 before she could realize her dream.

After Alison died, Sue Kamens wrote to Lutheran Social Services of Michigan for its help to build Alison House.

After three years of planning and review by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Lutheran Social Services closed on the purchase of the property in 2005. Ground was broken less than a month later.

Funding for the project came in large part from a \$1,158,600 grant from HUD and other organizations.

Mark Stutrud, Lutheran Social Services president, said people with disabilities should be able to blend in with society.

"We integrate the community," he said. "No one should be in isolation for any reason."

Munro's apartment has two bedrooms, and the bathroom has a hand rail plus a roll-in shower stall with a hand-held showerhead at her level.

The blinds, storage bins and oven are all reachable for Munro. She will use a special tool called a "reacher" - a stick equipped with a claw - to get items from the upper cupboards.

Munro's mother, Vickie, is excited about her daughter's move.

"It gives people with disabilities an opportunity to move out on their own and be an adult, make their own decisions," she said.

Sue Kamens said that if Alison were still alive, she'd be "tooling around" the halls in her wheelchair.

"We have done together as a community what we could not have accomplished all alone," Sue Kamens said.

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Michigan Report

March 8, 2007

## **HOUSE PASSES DEPARTMENT OVERSPENDING OVERSIGHT BILL**

A day after they sent a 2005-2006 supplemental back to the Senate with \$180.5 million in additional spending, House members approved a measure Thursday requiring further reporting by departments that are on track to overspend their budgets – a provision the Senate had previously inserted into the legislation by a unanimous vote.

The 104-0 vote on [SB 184](#) came after it was discharged from the Appropriations Committee and amended to require reports by departments – rather than each individual line item – on spending which exceeding the rate of appropriations. The reports would have to be submitted by June 1 of each year to the Appropriations chairs, subcommittee chairs and legislative fiscal agencies.

House Republicans who have been clamoring for more accountability standards on the individual departments failed in an attempt to implement sanctions on those departments, including 18 months revocation of system overriding privileges and hiring and purchasing abilities. Those departments would also be under monthly spending allotments and the governor would be allowed to remove the executive officer of each department if they overspent, under the Republican amendment.

“Whether we have a Republican or Democratic governor, I would support this,” said [Rep. Glenn Steil Jr.](#) (R-Cascade), who offered the amendment.

But Majority Floor Leader [Rep. Steve Tobocman](#) (D-Detroit) said House passage of SB 184 came to fruition based on an agreement reached by administration and Senate officials, and the House Republican amendment was not part of that deal, so he urged members to vote against it.

House Republicans then asked for a record roll call on the amendment, which resulted in a 55-49 vote, just shy of the majority needed for adoption. Six Democrats joined minority Republicans in supporting the amendment: [Rep. Terry Brown](#) (D-Pigeon), [Rep. Marc Corriveau](#) (D-Northville), [Rep. Robert Dean](#) (D-Grand Rapids), [Rep. Kate Ebli](#) (D-Monroe), [Rep. Mike Simpson](#) (D-Liberty Twp.) and [Rep. Mary Valentine](#) (D-Muskegon).

House [Minority Leader Craig DeRoche](#) (R-Novi) said the vote meant that “true spending reform was torpedoed. There are only two ways to balance the budget. Either state government reforms and tightens its belt, or we ask Michigan families to pay more. House Republicans are committed to reform. Today’s vote suggests Democrats have decided to ask Michigan families to pay more.”

Six members were absent for the vote: [Rep. Dan Acciavatti](#) (R-Chesterfield), [Rep. Marsha Cheeks](#) (D-Detroit), [Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer](#) (R-Bellaire), [Rep. Richard Hammel](#) (D-Flushing), [Rep. Shanelle Jackson](#) (D-Detroit) and [Rep. Paul Opsommer](#) (R-DeWitt).

A unanimous House vote was cast for [HB 4177](#), which allows residents serving on active duty to not be penalized for a lapse in their auto insurance if they can show they were serving away from home and that the car had not been driven during that time.

Also approved unanimously was [HB 4220](#), which allows school board members to serve as a volunteer coach if they abstain from voting on issues regarding the extracurricular program they are overseeing and they have gone through a criminal background check.

Meanwhile, with [SB 166](#), that will allow the state to close the books on the 2005-06 fiscal year, back in its possession, Senate Republicans are trying to see if they still keep the issue of controls of department overspending as part of the debate.

The House returned the bill to the Senate without a tie-bar to SB 184 which sets new requirements for departments to report to the Legislature if they see there is a chance they could spend more than their allocation for the fiscal year.

SB 184 was drafted after legislators learned that the departments of Corrections, Community Health and State Police overspent their 2005-06 appropriation.

SB 166 is a supplemental appropriation for those three departments in order to help close the books on the fiscal year.

Senate Appropriations Committee chair [Sen. Ron Jelinek](#) (R-Three Oaks) said the Senate GOP is still looking for a way to keep the overspending issue part of the 2005-06 solution. He said they hoped to have a proposal by next week.

The bill is required to close the books on the fiscal year by March 31.

## **SB 0184 To Tag Along**

MIRS, March 8, 2007

Today, the House unanimously passed **SB 0184**, legislation Republicans claim would provide greater oversight of departments in the wake of the three departments (the State Police, Human Services and Corrections) that overspent their allocated funds last year.

**SB 0184** has been at the center of an-ongoing dispute over **SB 0166**, the supplementary budget bill that would replace the money the departments overspent. Senate Republicans tie-barred **SB 0184** to **SB 0166**, but when the bill arrived in the House, the Democrats promptly removed the tie-bar. As a result, House Republicans refused to support **SB 0166** and then denied it Immediate Effect (I.E.) until yesterday, when the Democrats fast gaveled I.E. onto the legislation and sent it back to the Senate — where the dispute will presumably continue.

So today more than a few eyebrows were raised when House Majority Floor Leader Steve **TOBOCMAN**(D-Detroit) made a motion to have **SB 0184** discharged from the House Appropriations Committee. Word on the House floor was that some sort of deal had been struck involving **SB 0166** and **SB 0184**. It seems likely such a deal would involve final approval of the supplementary budget, or some sort of linkage to **SB 0184**, all rolled together in a manner that saves face for all concerned.

**SB 0184** would replace the current quarterly reports that compare appropriations to actual expenditures, with a requirement that the State Budget Office submit a report to the Legislature summarizing which line items were being spent at a rate above the assumed level.

Rep. Glenn **STEIL** (R-Grand Rapids) offered a substitute that would have required greater oversight, including a provision that would require Department heads to put into writing every time a department overspends, and provide for some sanctions against those departments when they do so.

The substitute was defeated by one vote, which was interesting because three House Republicans weren't present at today's session.

# THE DAILY Reporter

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## Panel hears of monoxide problem at FIA

[Print Page](#)

By Roland Stoy-Staff Writer

COLDWATER — It was a serious problem corrected before it became a dangerous problem.

With high levels of the deadly carbon monoxide detected at the Family Independence Agency (FIA) on Feb. 23, all employees were sent home in the late afternoon while county complex manager Al Hoopingarner and Tony Aker, of Aker, Inc., investigated the problem.

Hoopingarner had purchased a carbon monoxide tester following the disclosure by Branch County Sheriff Warren Canon that he and his wife had been hospitalized after high levels of the gas filled their home.

As in the Canon home, the carbon monoxide found isolated in the boiler room at the FIA was at a life-threatening level of 300 parts per million.

"I want to clarify that at no point was any individual exposed to carbon monoxide," Hoops told the Branch County courts and public safety committee, chaired by commissioner Jerry Hubbard.

Hoopingarner told the panel it was initially the smell of natural gas near the boiler room that eventually led to detection of the monoxide, and a Michigan Gas Utilities technician was also on the scene.

"Both Tony and the tech from Michigan Gas checked the building with CO detectors and could detect no measurable amounts in the building. The tech from the gas company used his detector in the boiler flue and found very high levels of CO," said Hoopingarner. "He advised Tony he was going to red-tag the boiler, which he did."

He said Ken Fickle from Aker checked out the boiler and adjusted the burner to eliminate improper burning, and county assistant Allen Booth went on to remove a natural draft flue from the boiler power vent flue and route it through the roof independently.

"There were very high winds that day," Hoopingarner said. "With the wind blowing so hard, it created a vacuum effect . . . It definitely had the potential for a problem."

"So, you solved the problem before it became a problem," noted commissioner Rod Olney.

Hoopingarner said a new carbon monoxide detector has been purchased and placed in proximity to the boiler room.

In another matter, E911 director Kurt Spalding told the panel of a coming emergency management exercise as has been done in the past, and is required as part of the government grant procedure.

He said the exercise will possibly simulate a large-scale accident on Interstate-69.

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